

The Research Frontier

I: Exploring Price Systems and Openness in Primary and Secondary Education

Getting there; Implementation and Transition Issues

A. Public-Private Tuition Sharing

Optimal Split
Phase-in Process

B. Matching Objectives to Policy Design

Escape from Under-Performing Schools to Another Part of the Current System is Consistent with What Objective?

Designs Appropriate for Achieving Better Performance from the Current System (Governance and Funding Processes) Without Fundamentally Changing it.

C. Incremental Change-Based Reform, Incl. the Pros/Cons of Targeting Certain Groups

The envisioned process in considerable detail, including predictable risks, difficulties and how those risks would be addressed; track record in education and generally.

Via public school choice?

Via public school choice, including chartered schools?

Via private school choice, including quasi-private chartered schools?

When/how to let competition become the primary regulating force?

D. The Radical Reform Strategy

Appropriate policies, transition issues, phase-in?, general and education-specific pro/con vs. incrementalism

E. Experiments: Pros and Cons, Real and Pseudo

Time Cost, Significance of Scale, Potential for Misleading 'Evidence'

Impact of Evidence; Misleading Evidence

Key Elements of True Tests of 'Tentative Procedures'

Do the Conditions of the Experiment Match the Definition of the Problem?

Importance of Implied Temporariness of an 'Experiment'

F. Legal Issues – Significance of Court Rulings and State Constitutions

G. System Friendly Reform: A Trial/Evaluation Encyclopedia

Context of Competing Reforms: 50 states have tried a variety of fixes; track record; theoretical and empirical analysis.

Context of Calls for Increased Openness:

H. Regulation Benefits, Key Regulation Risks, and Risk Factors

Potential Regulations – Pro/Con
Private Sector Independence vs. Private sector access
Present trends in independence, access, regulation
High Stakes Testing
Charter Impacts on Private Sector
Voucher Co-Payment (Top-Off) Limits / Price Control Effects / Equity Issues

I. Policy ‘Vehicle’ and Political Feasibility and Constitution Issues

Charter Law Analysis
Competition/Rivalry vs. Price Regulation
Pros/Cons of Government Control of Tuition Rates
Vouchers (Exclude church-run schools, or not, voucher size) VS.
Tax Credits (refundable, non-refundable, size); single vs. multi-tax; which taxes
Separation of school and state; instant or evolutionary

J. Weakening Key Opponents/Proponents

Teacher Unions, Teachers, Administrator Groups, ‘Right-Wing’ Think Tanks

K. Election Strategy Factors

Constituent Groups, Legislation, Ballot Initiative
Property Value Effects of the Policy Options

L. Economic / Political / Sociological Transition Processes and Issues

Lifetime Cash Flow Issues, Churn (Pay with Taxes what most people would buy anyway),
Schooling for Poor Children, Equity, Competition Issues, High Special Ed Costs, Getting
there; the Transition Issues
Addressing Property Value Effects to Increase Public Support for Particular Policy Options
Teacher Compensation / Retraining Issues

M. Pros/Cons of Complete Separation of School and State

N. Compromised Separation of School and State

Definition: Significant Market Activity When Free Public Schools are Widely
Seen as Awful.

Characteristics
Sustainability/Stability Issues

O. Where are the Political Obstacles the Smallest/Largest; Place(s) Most/Least Likely to be the
Earliest Adopter(s)?

State, Province, or Country most likely to adopt transformative policies.

II: Predictable Outcomes, Especially for Increased Openness and Various Means of Relaxing or Eliminating De Facto Price Control??

A. Teacher Labor Markets

Large number of individual, possibly specialized, smaller schools competing for teachers vs. a few, relatively uniform districts with large, “comprehensively uniform” schools competing for teachers.

Propensity for Performance-Based Pay, and Nature of Merit-Based Pay, Effects

Nature of Teacher Unions

Share of total school budgets

Effect on teacher supply of changed working conditions

Teacher attrition because of system-change, teacher quality

Pension Issues

B. Impact on the Public School System

Fixed Costs and Costs that Change When the Number of Students Changes

To What Extent Does ‘Money Matter’; Performance Impacts of Changed Budgets

Changes in Policies and Practices

C. Testing Practices, Including with NCLB effects combined with lower entry barriers.

Number of independent tests

Govt-mandated - Official high-stakes, or low stakes?

Basis for private certifications, importance in choice-making decisions

D. School Choice Information Systems

Pros/Cons of Govt role in creating and supplying comparative data, or fostering/supporting private information sources

E. Tracking / Ability or Performance-Based Grouping by Subject

Productivity, Equity, Flexibility

F. Curriculum and Textbooks

Quality, Cost, and Diversity of Content, Extremist Content

G. Socioeconomic Stratification – Racial/Ethnic Integration

Impact of Choice on Income Differences

Significance of Specialized Offerings

Mobility Issues – Housing Issues

Income Elasticity of Demand for Schooling Services

Detecting racial/ethnic discrimination

Self-enforcing economic penalties vs. Formal Penalties/Enforcement Action –
Pros/Cons

Bigots’ ‘Price’ Elasticity of Demand for Discrimination

Market Accountability Impact on ‘Price’ Paid for Discrimination

H. School and Education Calendars

Uniform Across Schools or Highly Variable?

Summers Off? Length varies between schools, or competition forces uniformly long or short year?

13 years for 'diploma' OR Based on attainment of minimum skills

Or set the number of years, and then maximize what is learned in that time

I. Uses of Technology

Increased Use of Technology to Teach

Pros/cons of Human Contact

Addressing Differences in How Children Learn, and what Engages them in Learning

J. Productivity Growth

Gains through Comparative Advantage Based Specialization

Better/Worse matching of children interests and educator skills

Rate of innovation

Diffusion of innovation

Changes in the uses of technology

K. Homeschooling

More or Less Than Now; Sensitivity Analysis of Assumption

L. Special Education

Gifted and Talented Children

Disadvantaged/Disabled

M. Corruption/Fraud

Likely Forms of Corruption

Graft Opportunities

Natural and Policy-based Corruption/Fraud Deterrence

N. Course Credit Transferability

Household Mobility problems within a system of competing, possibly highly specialized schools of choice

O. School Size

Smaller or Larger, Uniform, Highly Specialized, Minimally Specialized, Pros/Cons

P. Class Size Policies and Practices – Causes vs. Effects

Q. Private School Sector Composition – Church-run, Profit, Non-Profit, Independent, Franchise

R. Transportation - Subsidize; how, where, when; school buses?; competition effects

S. Housing Patterns

Home no longer decides public school assignment; or lessens the significance of the public school assignment.

T. Social Capital – National Identity/Unity

Home no longer decides public school assignment
Content no longer politically-determined, somewhat uniform within the system. Impact on political/legal battles over textbook and curriculum content
Changed social contact between immediate neighbors.

U. Central City Characteristics

Home address no longer decides public school assignment, or it reduces assignment importance
Changed Pressure to relocate for a better school.

V. Compulsory Schooling?

Should eliminate? If yes, how to eliminate; key to regulatory intrusion

W. The Nature of Accreditation

Subsidy eligibility
Recognized vs. accredited vs. certified
Private Accreditation vs. Public Agency Accreditation

X. Population Density Issues

School System Differences between Rural/Urban/Suburban
Impact on Diversity of choices
Price Regulation When not Enough Competition is Present
How Much is Enough to dispense with Price Regulation?

Y. Equity Issues – What Can We Expect from Charity/Philanthropy

Schooling of the Poor
Socioeconomic Stratification, more or less
Administration of Scholarship/Subsidy Co-Payment Grants
Need-based vs. Merit-based
Inequalities in Market-Driven vs. Politically-Driven Systems

Z. With/Without Price Control Effects

Limit/Ban/Tax Voucher Co-Payment (Top-Off, Add-on)
How Much Competition is Enough to 'Regulate' Prices?